

2006 NOAA Fisheries Employee of the Year Nomination Narrative

Nominee's Name: Last, First, Middle:

Nomination Category:

Williams, John G.

Supervisor

Dr. John Williams is nominated for the 2006 EOY in the Supervisors category because 1) he provided exceptional leadership of the science conducted in his Program that was critical to how NOAA Fisheries accomplished its mission in the Pacific NW, 2) he worked conscientiously and successfully with all staff to develop their skills and careers, and 3) he personally made significant scientific contributions to the stewardship of salmon stocks listed under the ESA.

1. John is the regional expert from all Federal agencies in the Pacific Northwest that the US Department of Justice chose to represent the Federal government when expert witnesses were needed in Federal District Court to provide testimony on hydropower operations to increase survival of listed stocks in 2006. Also, the DOJ periodically consulted with John on court cases even when he was not needed as a witness. His advice has tremendous impacts on the region, as \$10s of millions of dollars are spent or not spent based on his scientific advice. Internationally, in 2006 he helped groups in Sweden and Finland develop possible fish passage solutions that increase returns of anadromous fish. Based on his compelling technical input, it appears that millions (USD) will be spent at hydropower dams to improve existing facilities or install new passage facilities to recover salmon stocks where passage is presently blocked (e.g., Kemi and Oulu Rivers in Finland).

Because the hydropower issues in the Pacific NW are so difficult and contentious, virtually every analysis and report prepared by John's group is subject to intense scrutiny by regional scientists, policymakers, state and tribal fishery managers, and environmental and industry groups. The criticism can be withering, and the pressure is intense. Only the best work, and the most determined of scientists, can stand up under this kind of review. To quote Bob Lohn: "The scientific products from John's group not only survive such review; it has become the "gold standard" for Columbia River research. While others argue about, test, and tear into this work, at the end of the day, it is relied upon by virtually everyone because it is sound, well-supported, and accurate."

2. As a supervisor John is very highly respected by his employees. He works with each individual to develop new research and publication ideas. In 2006 he provided staff "retreats" at appropriate times which have been conducted in settings that were relaxed, yet inspired productive discussion and output. Through discussions and debates they developed important new questions suggested by the latest data, and identified approaches and analyses that can be conducted to inform and resolve these questions. Then, with his constant input and guidance, John's employees conducted the analyses and developed the data into peer-reviewed publications. In this regard, his small group of quantitative ecologists produced a large number of cutting-edge, urgently needed analyses. He is a senior (listed last) author on many publications because he is very much a mentor to younger staff. John is constantly looking for ways to advance the careers of his employees and their aspirations and does this by providing an abundance of needed training, and by frequently encouraging them to engage in career-enhancing activities such as authoring manuscripts, giving presentations in professional forums, and taking on challenging technical issues. Finally, he has shown his desire and ability to help his employees by developing clear, concise, and achievable performance plans that resulted in appropriate promotion and incentive-rewards for deserving individuals. In 2006 he developed publication plans and schedules for each employee and tracked their progress on each product, and then helped them work through any issues as they developed. The exceptional scientific productivity of his Program is a testament to his leadership.

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Narrative (continued)

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____Williams, John G.____

____Supervisor____

3. Dr. Williams provided strong leadership and scientific prowess in 2006 in helping NOAA Fisheries meet its mandate to preserve and enhance salmon species in the Columbia River Basin. He has provided leadership and support for several (>five) salmon research projects which provide critical data for decisions made by hydropower system management agencies. He has contributed useful and needed vocal and written debate in discussion forums where these decisions are made, by interpreting data results for managers and defending data, studies, and (his supervised) scientists. In 2006 John and his team briefed the Power Planning Council and FCRPS BiOp Policy Work Group on several occasions and provided updates on reach survival, Snake River fall Chinook salmon, and transportation research. His Program developed the COMPASS model under his guidance in 2006, which is the analytical foundation for the development and implementation of a new BiOp in response to the Court remanded 2004 FCRPS BiOp. In 2006 he participated as an expert member in several panels, including a Yale University workshop on dam removal that included Bruce Babbitt, and review for ODFW on the status of Chinook salmon in NE Oregon, and he was the leader for a symposium session on Snake River fall Chinook salmon led by Robin Waples that explored the potential for evolutionary impacts to fall Chinook salmon from anthropogenic factors.

In summary, John Williams is a highly productive and respected scientist and manager. In 2006, his Program produced cutting-edge products that informed the issues facing NOAA Fisheries and salmon in the Pacific NW. He accomplished this by providing exceptional leadership to his employees on the technical aspects of their work and by setting appropriate goals and priorities, and by working with employees to guide their individual careers and foster their professional development.

It is a both a pleasure and a privilege to nominate John Williams as a NWFSC employee of the year in 2006.